**Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population 2014**

*This new publication from the Ministry of Health shows how all Brazilians can enjoy adequate and healthy diets that are nutritionally balanced, delicious and culturally appropriate. The recommended diets also promote food systems that are socially and environmentally sustainable.*

On October 5th 2014, the Ministry of Health published the new *Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population.* In print, the document in Portuguese (152 pages, fully illustrated) is being distributed throughout the country and pdf can be downloaded at dab.saude.gov.br or nupensusp.wix.com/nupens. The pdf of the English version of the *Guidelines* will be available for download at the same sites in about one week.

The *Guidelines* have been prepared by the Ministry of Health with the technical assistance of the Centre for Epidemiological Studies on Health and Nutrition at the University of São Paulo, and with support from the Pan American Health Organization. They replace the previous Guidelines issued in 2006.

Their preparation began in November 2011. The process has included two national meetings involving researchers, health professionals, educators, and representatives of civil society organisations from all regions of Brazil, and also regional meetings in the 26 Brazilian States and the Federal District. In draft, the *Guidelines* were subjected to public consultation. This resulted in 3,125 responses from 436 participants, including from universities, public bodies, professional representative organisations, the private sector, and from health professionals and members of the public personally.

The *Guidelines* include a set of recommendations on food and nutrition. Their purpose is to protect and improve the health and well-being of people, families, communities and society as a whole, now and in future. Special attention is given to the prevention of under-nutrition, now rapidly decreasing everywhere in the country, and to the prevention of increasingly important public health problems in Brazil such as obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diet-related diseases.

The recommendations of the *Guidelines* are based on evidence from different sources, including experimental, clinical and population studies, and also on natural experiments implied in the selection and adaptation of dietary patterns evolved over many generations.

The *Guidelines* address people and families directly and also health professionals, educators, community agents and other workers responsible for health promotion. They can be used in households, in health, community and social assistance centres, and in schools and every other place concerned with the protection of health and the promotion of well-being.

The *Guidelines* distinguish between natural and minimally processed foods and food products, between food products used to season and cook foods and prepare fresh dishes and meals and ready-to consume products, and also between processed and ultra-processed ready-to-consume products.

The *Guidelines* make four central recommendations to promote good health and well-being and to protect against disease.

 ***Make natural or minimally processed foods the basis of your diet***

 Natural or minimally processed foods, in great variety, mainly of plant origin, are the basis for diets that are nutritious, delicious, appropriate, and supportive of socially and environmentally sustainable food systems.

 ***Use oils, fats, salt, and sugar in small amounts for seasoning and cooking foods and to create culinary preparations***

 As long as they are used in moderation in culinary preparations based on natural or minimally processed foods, oils, fats, salt, and sugar contribute toward diverse and delicious diets without rendering them nutritionally unbalanced.

 ***Limit the use of processed foods, consuming them in small amounts as ingredients in culinary preparations or as part of meals based on natural or minimally processed foods***

 The ingredients and techniques used in the manufacture of processed foods – such as vegetables in brine, fruits in syrup, cheeses and breads - unfavourably alter the nutritional composition of the foods from which they are derived.

 ***Avoid ultra-processed products***

 Because of their ingredients, ultra-processed products—such as packaged snacks, soft drinks, and instant noodles – are nutritionally unbalanced. As a result of their formulation and presentation, they tend to be consumed in excess, and displace natural or minimally processed foods. Their means of production, distribution, marketing, and consumption damage culture, social life, and the environment.

The *Guidelines* overall rule is easy to remember and follow: Always prefer natural or minimally processed foods and freshly made dishes and meals to ultra-processed products.

In other words, prefer water, milk, and fruits instead of soft drinks, dairy drinks, and biscuits, do not replace freshly prepared dishes (broth, soups, salads, sauces, rice and beans, pasta, steamed vegetables, pies) with products that do not require culinary preparation (packaged soups, instant noodles, pre-prepared frozen dishes, sandwiches, cold cuts and sausages, industrialised sauces, ready-mixes for pies), and stick to homemade desserts, avoiding industrialised ones.

A special feature of the *Guidelines* is that their recommendations are based on the actual dietary patterns of a substantial proportion of the Brazilian population of all ages and classes throughout the country. These families and people base their diets on natural and minimally processed food, and on freshly prepared dishes and meals made from these foods.

The *Guidelines* give special importance to the ways in which foods are produced, made, distributed and sold, always preferring those that contribute to food systems that are socially and environmentally sustainable, including those produced by organic and agroecological methods.

Emphasis is also given to how food is eaten. Healthy ways of eating are regular, mindful, in pleasant surroundings and always when possible, enjoyed in company. Benefits include better digestion, improved control of how much and what is consumed, more opportunities for convivial living with family, friends and colleagues, better social interaction, and in general, greater pleasure in food and in life.

 ‘The recommendations of the *Guidelines* will benefit our people, our society, and the planet’ says Carlos Monteiro, Professor of Nutrition and Public Health at the University of São Paulo, and leader of the team responsible for the technical development of the *Guidelines*.

The final chapter of the *Guidelines* identifies obstacles that may impede following their recommendations. These include the supply and cost of natural or minimally processed foods, lack of knowledge of cooking and other culinary skills, the time required to prepare and enjoy fresh meals, and the incessant marketing of ultra-processed food products. The chapter also shows how these obstacles can be overcome by people personally and acting as citizens.

‘In Brazil, as in many other countries, cooking skills are not being passed on and learned by younger generations’ says Patricia Jaime, head of the Food and Nutrition section in the Ministry of Health, and responsible for the general coordination of the development of the *Guidelines*. For this reason, she says, the *Guidelines* give importance in their recommendations to valorising culinary skills, to encouraging all household members, men, women and children to join in acquiring, preparing and cooking meals, and to supporting the tradition of freshly prepared meals as part of the national social and cultural patrimony.

All the recommendations of the *Guidelines* are summarised in the section *Ten Steps to Healthy Diets.*

1. Make natural or minimally processed foods the basis of your diet
2. Use oils, fats, salt, and sugar in small amounts when seasoning and cooking natural or minimally processed foods and to create culinary preparations
3. Limit consumption of processed foods
4. Avoid consumption of ultra-processed products
5. Eat regularly and carefully in appropriate environments and, whenever possible, in company
6. Shop in places that offer a variety of natural or minimally processed foods
7. Develop, exercise and share culinary skills
8. Plan your time to make food and eating important in your life
9. Out of home, prefer places that serve freshly made meals
10. Be wary of food advertising and marketing